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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, April 30, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Play Night at Home." Information furnished by Mr. J. W. Faust of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, cooperating with Better Homes in America. Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Leaflet available: "Lamb As You Like It."

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The other day I heard a story about a 12-year-old boy who was invited to a party. Jimmie accepted the invitation eagerly.

"When is the party going to be?" inquired Jimmie.

"On Friday night."

"I can't come," said Jimmie. "You see, that's our play night at home, and I wouldn't miss it for anything."

Every Friday night, for a year or more, the members of Jimmy's family have had a "date" together. Father and mother, sister Betty, Jimmy and little brother all pitch in and help with the dishes. Then they have a party of their own, with games and music, stunts and charades, story-telling, candy-pulling, or some other sort of home entertainment.

In the summer time, they stage their home play nights in the backyard or on the porch; in the winter, around the fireplace. Father and mother have kept the Friday night dates as religiously as the children have. They all agree that there's no place like home for a good time.

I wondered, after hearing this story, how many 12-year-olds would turn down a party invitation to keep a "play night" engagement at home with the family.

Years ago, families spent their recreation hours together as a matter of course. The home was the center for recreational life. But today-- what with automobiles and such -- sometimes it looks as though every member of the family is trying his level best to get away from home, to spend his spare time with his own special set of friends. No wonder the American home has been called "an American-plan hotel." It's a convenient place to eat and sleep, but that's about all.

Yet, in these complex days, Jimmie and Betty need their home more than they ever have before. Play at home with their parents is a safeguard, and a balance. From the parents' point of view, it pays to be the children's playfellow. When families play, they meet on common ground. Instead of "Don't do that, Jimmy," and "Betty, what in the world are you up to now?" it's, "Let's do this together."

Did you read about the Home Play week, observed recently in a certain city in the Middle West? The school children were asked to write compositions about how they played at home. Some of the compositions contained much food for thought, for parents. One boy wrote: "I never knew what a good sport Dad is, until we played games together."

A little girl wrote this: "The parents should play with their children, because both are getting exercise. The children would be glad to have them. Sometimes when your father is tired out from work, it would do him good to get out in the fresh air and play a game or two with you, or else tell a story to you. Your mothers and fathers can tell you how to play fair. The children do not pay so much attention to their parents if they do not play with them."

Well, there we are-- from the standpoint of the younger generation. They break down and admit that they "do not pay so much attention to their parents if they do not play with them."

How shall we go about it, to capture this precious spirit of play? It must be sought for. We must take time and effort to plan ahead for a program that will intrigue the interest of the youngsters. But the results of this planning are worth all the energy we put into it.

One of the best ways to start home recreation is to set aside a definite evening, once a week, as a family play night. Father, mother, and the older boys and girls can each take their turn in arranging the program of events. This gives the children a sense of responsibility, and valuable training in the art of being a good host or hostess. Even the younger children can be responsible for bringing home some new game or song or story, to contribute to the evening.

And then think of the plays they can construct -- every child with an active imagination can "make up" a play. If their dramatic efforts are not interfered with, nor criticized, these young actors will not become self-conscious.

Fortunate indeed is the family which has a backyard, to serve as a rallying point for home recreation. It is possible to turn the backyard into a regular summer resort, and have a glorious vacation time. Tomorrow, I'm going to tell you how to equip the backyard for play.

Now, if you are prepared, we shall write the children's menu. Our friend the Menu Specialist has planned a particularly good meal today -- beginning with Lamb Stew, and concluding with Cinnamon Toast. In between the Stew and the Toast are Buttered Hominy Grits; Celery Hearts; and Sliced Oranges.

Do you know that lamb is less expensive now, than it has been for a number of years? And what is better than a good lamb stew, for children and their elders? Breasts, shoulder, neck, flank, and trimmings are all good for lamb stew. Let me give you a regular recipe. If you have a copy of the leaflet, "Lamb As You Like It," you needn't write this recipe. Otherwise, you "better had." Eight ingredients, for Lamb Stew:

2 pounds lean raw lamb	1 green pepper, chopped
2 tablespoons butter	1 quart water
1/2 cup sliced onion	Flour, and
3 cups diced rutabaga turnip	Salt and pepper.

Eight ingredients, for Lamb Stew: (Repeat).

Wipe the meat with damp cloth. Cut into small pieces. Roll in flour. Melt the butter in a skillet. Add the onion. Cook until the onion turns yellow. Add the meat. When the meat and onion have browned delicately, transfer them to a kettle. Add the water, after first pouring it into the skillet so as to get full benefit of the browned fat. Cover, and simmer for one hour. Then add the turnip, green pepper, and seasonings. Cook 20 minutes longer. If the stew is not thick enough, add 1 tablespoon of flour mixed with 2 tablespoons of cold water, and cook for several minutes longer, stirring constantly. Serve piping hot.

Does everybody know how to make Cinnamon Toast? Of course -- of course. It is as simple as A, B, C. For Cinnamon Toast, make a mixture of fine granulated sugar, in the proportion of 1/4 cup sugar to 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon. Put this mixture in a large shaker, and sift it onto hot buttered toast. Or hold the toast at an angle, and spoon the cinnamon and sugar over it. Enough will cling to the buttered surface to give flavor, and the rest will fall back into the dish.

As the Menu Specialist says, "Cinnamon toast has its points, as a flavorful, not-too-sweet, crisp, crunchy accompaniment for fruit, in a children's menu."

And I never argue with the Menu Specialist when it comes to planning meals -- in fact, I thank my lucky stars that she knows how to plan such appetizing meals. But sometimes I marvel at her ingenuity -- I don't see how any one person can think of so many different combinations, and still have all of them good.

To repeat this children's menu: Lamb Stew; Buttered Hominy Grits; Celery Hearts; Sliced Oranges; and Cinnamon Toast.

Tomorrow: "The Backyard Playground."

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